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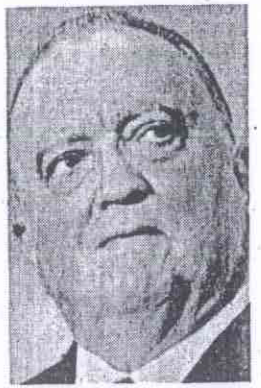
Hoover's vendetta targeted Dallas police, memos reveal



J. Edgar Hoover ... "Deal at arm's length with Dallas police."

By EARL GOLZ

FBI documents obtained recently detail a vendetta FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover conducted against the Dallas Police Department from the time President John F. Kennedy was assassinated until Police Chief Jesse Curry resigned more than two years later.

The documents, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, show that Dallas Mayor Erik Jonsson met with Hoover in the director's office in early 1966 and assured Hoover he would "immediately instruct the city manager to have a stern talk" with Curry.

Less than a month later, in February 1966, Curry resigned, citing an increase in blood pressure resulting from "the continued pressures and tensions of the office." Curry, 66, died of heart problems last June 22.

Within months of Curry's resignation, FBI agents returned to their posts as instructors at the Dallas Police Academy after an unofficial boycott of more than two years, and the FBI invited the first Dallas officer in more than two years to attend the FBI National Academy in Washington.

Under orders from Hoover in 1964 and 1965, Dallas FBI agent-in-charge J. Gordon Shanklin repeatedly rejected Curry's requests for a resumption of FBI training for Dallas policemen. Rather than tell Curry it was Hoover's rage, Shanklin was instructed to keep telling Curry "we (FBI) just don't have the manpower to take on additional training commitments at this time," according to FBI documents.

The cessation of FBI training as-

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Jesse Curry ... "Pressures and tensions" cited in resignation.

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Ex-mayor hazy on talk

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sistance was triggered by a statement attributed to FBI agent James P. Hosty Jr. by Dallas police Lt. Jack Revill on the day of the assassination, FBI memos show.

Revill, now assistant chief and the second most powerful figure on the Dallas police force, claimed at the time that Hosty told him the FBI knew before the assassination that Lee Harvey Oswald was "capable of committing the assassination of President Kennedy." Hosty later denied making such a statement.

The problem was compounded when Curry said on television the day after the assassination the FBI wanted to cover up information that it was aware of Oswald's presence in Dallas and had not notified Dallas police. He retracted the statement after Shanklin challenged him to prove it.

Months later in 1964, Curry, under pressure from the FBI, wrote Shanklin a letter stating neither Shanklin nor any other FBI source "ever asked me to 'cover up' the fact that the FBI knew Lee Harvey Oswald was in Dallas" before the assassination. The next day Hoover wrote a memo instructing an aide to "caution Shanklin that any contacts with Curry and (City Mgr. Elgin) Crull in the future be most circumspect."

Earlier, on April 28, 1964, Hoover had written instructions to Shanklin that he "and personnel of your office are to deal at arm's length with Dallas Police Department personnel. We will not extend training assistance, nor will we accept candidates from that department to the (FBI) National Academy."

IN DECEMBER 1964 Shanklin told Hoover in a letter that Curry was requesting FBI assistance in training Dallas police on mob and riot control. Shanklin said President Lyndon Johnson had instructed the FBI to make riot control training available to all police departments in the country.

"I am also of the opinion that if we refuse to make this training available to the biggest police department in our territory, that we may be in a somewhat untenable position," Shanklin told Hoover.

Hoover agreed to extend mob and riot control training to Dallas police "in this one instance; however, this single exception does not change existing instructions regarding future training requests or other relations with that department."

The cold war continued for two years, until the Dallas mayor visited Hoover's office. Hoover wrote a memo to Shanklin stating that at the meeting on Jan. 19, 1966, Jonsson "asked to discuss the serious breach between this bureau and the Dallas Police Department, if one exists."

"I informed Mayor Jonsson that a breach in relations with Chief of Police Curry and his department does exist," Hoover wrote. "I made it perfectly clear actions and statements by Chief Curry and some of his personnel with respect to the bureau clearly indicated they are incompetent, blabbermouths and, in some instances, liars.

"MAYOR JONSSON assured me he is going to immediately instruct the Dallas city manager to have a stern talk with Chief Curry and lay down certain guidelines under which Curry will be expected to operate. Among those guidelines are orders that Curry shall be certain of his facts in any statements made, establish tight discipline in his department and be circumspect in his remarks to the press.

"I told Jonsson the bureau will resume training assistance to the Dallas Police Department if he can assure me that Curry has been brought under proper controls, and that discipline has been established in the police department."

Hoover said Jonsson told him he would have a "stern talk" the next day with City Mgr. Crull and instruct him to "prepare guidelines under which the Dallas Police Department and Chief Curry are to operate."

Jonsson assured Hoover he would give Crull and Curry two weeks to implement the guidelines, at which time Jonsson would check to ensure his instructions were carried out, according to Hoover's memo.

"If they have been," Hoover said, "he will so advise me and request that we again extend training assistance to the Dallas Police Department."

Jonsson said recently he recalls meeting with Hoover in his office, but they "just talked about police problems in general. What we talked about was a wide range of things and I don't remember any comment about Curry or the Dallas Police Department.

"I THINK I would have remembered if these things (in Hoover's memo to Shanklin) had been said," Jonsson said. "I do remember that Hoover commented on Martin Luther King, and not favorably. But that's the only thing I really remember clearly about it. That made an impression on me."

When Crull announced the day Curry resigned that Charles Batchelor would be the new chief, Shanklin wrote Hoover a memo saying Batchelor "has been very cooperative with the bureau and he was not involved in any of the controversy arising over the assassination."

Hoover wrote back to Shanklin that "should the new chief of police be an individual with whom the bureau can work, you should submit appropriate recommendation regarding the resumption of normal cooperative relations with that department."

Three days later, Shanklin wrote Hoover to say the FBI "can certainly work with him, and I therefore recommend that the restriction on dealing with the Dallas Police Department be removed and that we resume normal cooperative relations."

Hoover responded that if Shanklin can work with Batchelor "and he runs the Dallas Police Department with a firm hand, you may resume normal cooperative relations with that department. This includes the extending of training assistance locally, and the nomination of qualified candidates to future sessions of the FBI National Academy."

LATER IN 1966 the FBI forced Batchelor to take action against Revill, the other Hoover nemesis who reported that Hosty had told him the FBI knew of Oswald's potential for violence before the assassination.

In July 1966 Shanklin revealed to Batchelor and Jonsson that Revill and another officer copied an FBI report listing the names of suspected Mafia members in key U.S. cities, including Dallas, and forwarded it to Los Angeles Police Department intelligence officers.

Batchelor reacted by transferring Revill from intelligence to a "less critical" area in the personnel bureau, Batchelor wrote Hoover. Batchelor apologized and told the FBI director that "such unethical and unauthorized use of information obtained from another police agency does not have the approval of this department."

BATCHELOR would only tell reporters that the transfer of Revill and others was "an internal police affair."

On Nov. 3, 1966, Hoover wrote Shanklin a memo advising that Batchelor visited Hoover's office the day before and "expressed to me his deep appreciation for the cooperation his department received from the FBI. I assured him of the full cooperation of the FBI in all matters of mutual interest. For your information, a photograph was taken at the end of this visit and photograph is being sent separately to Chief Batchelor."

Batchelor died at the end of 1969 after coming under increasing criticism from within police department ranks. Eight months before Batchelor's death, Jonsson denied rumors of an "early retirement" of the chief.